

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transit Working Group Coffee Chat Summary

January 11, 2022, Meeting

4:00 PM–5:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform, link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYQtMt1EV8c>

Representatives of regional transit authorities (RTAs), transportation management associations, municipalities, state agencies, other transit providers, researchers, and members of advisory groups met for one hour to discuss human service transportation (HST). Jennifer Henning of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) gave the presentation titled “Expanding Mobility with the Community Transit Grant Program.” Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff suggested the following discussion questions for this meeting:

1. How can the MPO support stakeholders in applying for funding sources such as the Community Transit Grant Program?
2. What are the current gaps or challenges in medical and human service transportation in the Boston region today?
3. What resources (funding, technologies, etc.) are needed to launch or support medical or human service transportation?

Summary of Discussion

Community Transit Grant Program

- The Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP) disperses Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 and State Mobility Assistance Program funding on a competitive basis to provide and strengthen existing transportation services to meet the mobility needs of older adults and people with disabilities. The program is administered by the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division.
- Non-profit organizations, municipalities, Councils of Aging, and RTAs are eligible to apply to the CTGP to receive funding in one of the three categories: capital expenses; operating expenses; and mobility management expenses.
- For capital projects, MassDOT is responsible for procurement of vehicles from a select list. Agencies have online access to documentation on vehicle specifications. For operating projects, MassDOT can cover drivers’ dispatch and salaries, fuel maintenance, direct administrative costs, and office rental space. In order to be considered for funding, operating projects have to exceed the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and demonstrate

that they augment or complement the existing public transportation network. Mobility management projects include complementary activities that improve coordination of coordinated transportation services, such as development of instructional materials that help riders navigate mobility options, travel training, and short-range planning and technology. All projects and activities that are being considered for CTGP funding must be covered in a local Coordinated Plan and identify the transportation needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities and provide strategies for meeting these needs.

- The CTGP covers 80 percent of capital and mobility management expenses and 50 percent of operating expenses. Grant applicants are required to secure matching funding sources in order to cover part of the project cost. Eligible sources include local government appropriations, local dedicated tax revenues, private or foundation donations, net income from advertising or concessions, agency contracts, such as human service program funding, non-DOT federal funds, and in-kind donations. The Federal Transit Administration has compiled a [list](#) of non-DOT federal agencies and programs that might be a source of match for Section 5310.
- MassDOT is currently working on the grant program for fiscal year 2023 and is scheduled to announce the CTGP awards in February. Application trainings will be held in late April through the beginning of May, followed by the application period in May through June 2022. Evaluation and approval will take place in July through September and October through November 2022, respectively. Operating expenses will be available starting in January 2023 to grant recipients. Those who request vehicles will not get them until June 2023 or later.
- As outlined in the “Expanding Mobility through MassDOT’s Community Transit Grant Program” [report](#), successful projects respond to unmet transportation need, coordinate with partners across sectors, include riders in project planning and design, and prioritize transportation for older adults and people with disabilities while offering unused seats to the general public. The report highlights past grantees that incorporate these best practices.
- Cross-jurisdictional projects whose service areas span across multiple municipal or RTA boundaries have been awarded CTGP grants in the past. They need to comply with the Coordinated Plan of the respective MPOs participating municipalities are affiliated with. For example, the Quaboag Connector is a collaboration among nine rural towns that was built on existing partnerships and operates across municipal and RTA boundaries.
- Data and reporting requirements vary depending on the type of projects.

Surge Pricing in Ridehailing Services

- Surge pricing in Transportation Network Company (TNC) services, which refers to an increase in pricing as a result of an imbalance between supply and demand, is detrimental to municipal efforts to address transportation gaps and equity. For example, the Town of Burlington pays up to a certain amount of Lyft fares for eligible residents. Anything beyond what the Town is able to pay is the rider's responsibility. Due to surge pricing, riders with fixed income inevitably spend more on transportation, which goes against the original intention of Burlington's subsidy program. The Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) had a similar experience with Uber and Lyft and expressed concern for the impact of surge pricing on program effectiveness. Due to surge pricing and limited funding, GATRA would not be able to support as many trips.
- While MassDOT is not responsible for the contracting portion of human service transportation programs, some of the participating agencies partner with TNCs and may have negotiated contracts differently. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is preparing information regarding partnerships with TNCs.

Gaps and fragmentation of Human Service Transportation

- There are different sources of transportation available, but they are all treated as separate entities. As a result, transportation in Lexington—particularly medical transportation that makes up a significant portion of rides—is fragmented. Transportation has to be guaranteed for seniors, and providing demand-response service for them is challenging due to the nature of their trips: people not only travel far and often, but have to be transported back in a timely manner. A volunteer program has helped to create a larger pool of resources for medical transportation. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) RIDE is a great model for a larger service area.
- We are constantly solving and resolving our transportation issues piecemeal. In general, we have not succeeded in tying them all together, which has contributed to the inefficiency in today's transportation services. Several towns worked together to create the CrossTown Connect TMA and coordinate transportation dispatch. The coordination has been somewhat successful, but there are still a lot of silos to be addressed.
- MassDOT is invested in improving transportation in Massachusetts as a cohesive whole. The only way to achieve integration is by reinforcing cross-jurisdictional coordination and collaboration. For this reason, cross-jurisdictional projects are weighed more heavily in application evaluations. MassDOT is aware that the funding for coordinated transportation is reactive to applications instead of being proactive, making it challenging for eligible entities to coordinate and collaborate.

- [RideMatch](#) is a great resource for addressing the Boston region's fragmented transportation system. All of the information on transportation services could be captured in RideMatch with specific needs and trip characteristics.
- Chicagoland required applicants to describe in the Section 5310 program how they are collaborating and coordinating with other services and organizations. The CTGP could build a similar feature into the application.
- It seems that a lot of the transportation programs leave out low-income people. Providing a demand-response service for them can be challenging if they are going to work every day—it would require more time and resources to meet their needs as opposed to those who have retired. The MPO could help municipalities and transportation providers to proactively think about making efficient use of resources to best serve residents.

Attendance

Attendee	Affiliation
Susan Barrett	Town of Lexington
Andrea Becerra	Town of Lexington
Angela Constantino	Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority
Rachel Fichtenbaum	MassMobility
Sophia Galimore	TransAction Associates
Jennifer Glass	Town of Lincoln
Kristine Gorman	Jacobs
Perry Grossman	Brookline Bike Advisory Committee
Jennifer Henning	MassDOT
Carmel Levy	MBTA
Shoma Norman	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Steven Olanoff	Westwood Planning Board
Franny Osman	Town of Acton
Jess Rice	Needham Council of Aging
Thomas Rozelle	MassDOT
Judy Shanley	Easterseals
John Strauss	Burlington Transportation Committee
Lisa Weber	EOHHS

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Róisín Foley
Betsy Harvey
Sandy Johnston
Stella Jordan
Heyne Kim
Sean Rourke

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